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ABSTRACT

The benefits of family literacy programs for children were examined in a 1997 follow-up study in which 154 parents and 237 children who had participated in a family literacy demonstration program in 1994-1995 were interviewed along with the teachers of a subsample of the children and the demonstration program coordinators. The demonstration programs were in Cardiff, Wales, and Liverpool, Norfolk, and North Tyneside, England. All 237 children recontacted had maintained the basic skill gains made during the program. Parents and demonstration coordinators alike believed strongly that the children were continuing to benefit from the family literacy program. Of the 154 parents recontacted, 66 (43%) were employed in 1997 (versus 29 in 1994-1995). Of those 66 employed parents, 57 (86%) attributed their finding employment directly to the family literacy program. Ninety-two (60%) of the 154 parents had taken at least 1 additional course of study and eighty-seven (56%) stated that they were involved with their children's schools. The percentage of family literacy program completers who were involved with their children's schools was nearly double that of parents of children in a control group. (Sixteen tables/figures are included. Contains 11 references. Appended are a description of the study methodology and additional details about the continuing benefits of family literacy programs for children.) (MN)

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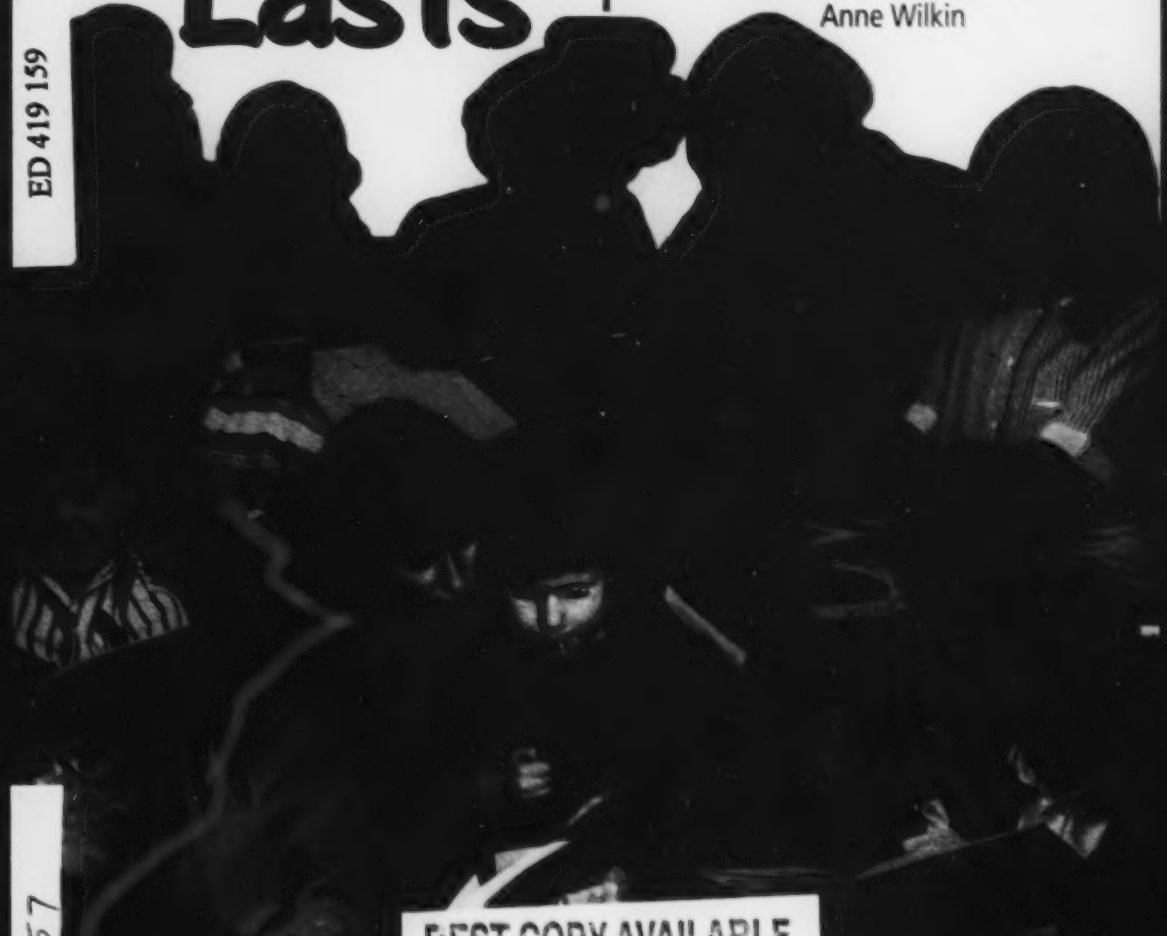
Family Literacy Lasts

The NFER follow-up study of the Basic Skills Agency's Demonstration Programmes

Greg Brooks • Tom Gorman
John Harman • Dougal Hutchison
Kay Kinder • Helen Moor
Anne Wilkin



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National Foundation for Educational Research

The Basic Skills Agency

FAMILY LITERACY LASTS

The NFER follow-up study of the Basic Skills Agency's Demonstration Programmes

Greg Brooks
Tom Gorman
John Harman
Dougal Hutchison
Kay Kinder
Helen Moor
Anne Wilkin

The Basic Skills Agency

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Foreword

NFER's original research on family literacy showed that both parents and children made very significant gains during the programmes. With any new programme which helps to raise standards, all of us in education want an answer to the question 'do the effects last?'

We asked NFER to try and answer this question by following up families who had been on programmes, twenty to thirty four months later. Encouragingly, their research shows that the impact has been sustained. The children have maintained the gains they made, and their teachers saw them as 'likely to succeed'. A strikingly high proportion of the parents have continued to study. They were also twice as likely as parents in a control group to be involved with their child's school. This is particularly significant when we know from other research that parents with limited basic skills are much less likely than others to be, for example, a member of the PTA. Family literacy courses offer one way of changing that.

I am grateful to Greg Brooks and the team at NFER and also to the parents, children, teachers and LEA officers in Cardiff, Liverpool, Norfolk and North Tyneside. Without their help we could never have answered the question.

Alan Wells OBE
Director
The Basic Skills Agency

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Members of the project team

Dr Greg Brooks, Senior Research Officer at NFER, Slough, was the Project Leader, carried out fieldwork in Norfolk, and was the principal author of this report.

Dr Tom Gorman, consultant to NFER, based in Worcestershire, marked the children's writing.

John Harman, consultant to NFER, based in Berkshire, carried out fieldwork in Cardiff and analysed and wrote the commentary on all of the parent interviews.

Dougal Hutchison, Chief Statistician at NFER, was the project statistician.

Kay Kinder, Senior Research Officer at NFER's Northern Office in York, carried out fieldwork in Liverpool and North Tyneside, and analysed and wrote the commentary on the coordinator interviews.

Anne Wilkin, Research Officer at NFER's Northern Office in York, carried out fieldwork in Liverpool and North Tyneside.

Helen Moor, Assistant Research Officer at NFER's Northern Office in York, carried out fieldwork in Liverpool and North Tyneside.

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- Dr Peter Shepherd and Dr Kate Smith of City University, London, for providing training on the Peabody tests
- the Basic Skills and Early Years Co-ordinators and other teachers in the Programmes, for stalwartly gathering most of the data for us
- the teachers in the Family Literacy children's schools, for their help and collaboration

and especially to

- all the parents and children involved, for enduring so much testing and interviewing, again.

Executive Summary

Design of this study

- In 1997 the Basic Skills Agency commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to follow up the parents and children who had participated in the Family Literacy Demonstration Programmes in 1994/95.
- The aim was to investigate the extent to which children had sustained the gains they had made during their courses, and the extent to which Family Literacy continued to have an impact on parents' ability to help their children, as well as on their employment and education.
- A total of 154 parents and 237 children were re-contacted between January and April 1997.
- Also, interviews were carried out with the teachers of a subsample of the children, and with the Demonstration Programme coordinators.

Main findings on the continuing benefits for children

- **The 237 Family Literacy children re-contacted had maintained the gains made during the courses in vocabulary, reading and writing.**
- **The parents and the Demonstration Programme coordinators were strongly of the opinion that the children were continuing to benefit.**

The interviews with teachers showed that

- **Family Literacy children were superior to their peers in the support they received from their families, classroom behaviour, and probable success in school; and**
- **Family Literacy children were equal to their peers in other academic and motivational respects.**

Thus overall

- **the Family Literacy children were holding their own, and their educational prospects were better than they would have been without Family Literacy.**

Main findings on the continuing benefits for parents

Of the 154 parents re-contacted,

- **66 (43 per cent) were in work in 1997**, up from 29 (19 per cent) in 1994/95;

and of these 66,

- **57 (86 per cent of those in work) attributed their gaining employment directly to Family Literacy.**

Of the full group of 154,

- **92 (60 per cent) had taken at least one further course of study**, whereas none were studying in 1994/95;

and of these 92,

- **78** (51 per cent of the total) **had achieved a further qualification;** and
- **76** (49 per cent of the total) **intended to continue studying;**
- Thus **the 'study rate' in this group had risen from zero to 60 per cent, and many had gained qualifications**.

Of the 154 parents re-contacted,

- 133 **(86 per cent) thought that their own reading and writing were continuing to benefit** from Family Literacy; and
- 146 **(95 per cent) thought that their ability to help their children with reading and writing was continuing to benefit**.

In the coordinators' opinion, these benefits arose mainly from **increased literacy awareness and activity in the home**.

Of the 154 parents re-contacted,

- **87 (56 per cent) said that they were involved with their children's schools;**

and of these

- **42 (48 per cent of those involved with schools) had become literacy helpers in the classroom.**
- The rate of involvement of Family Literacy parents with their children's schools was **double that of parents of children in a control group.**
- Of the 154 parents re-contacted, 141 (92 per cent) thought that they were continuing to **benefit from Family Literacy in other ways**, especially in **confidence** and in **communication skills.**
- **Therefore the parents continued to benefit in employment, study, qualifications, literacy, ability to help their children, and involvement with their children's schools.**

And overall,

- **Family Literacy parents continued to widen their participation in education and in society generally.**

Overall conclusion: this follow-up study shows that the Family Literacy children have successfully maintained the gains they made during the courses, and that the parents have continued to widen their participation in education and society.

Origin, Aims and Outline of the Study

1.1 Origin

In 1993/94, the Basic Skills Agency established four Family Literacy Demonstration Programmes in areas of multiple deprivation in Cardiff, Liverpool, Norfolk and North Tyneside. The NFER evaluated these programmes in the four terms from Summer 1994 to Summer 1995. Participating parents and children were tested on entry to the 12-week courses and near their end, and (where possible within the timescale of the evaluation) also 12 weeks and 9 months after the end of the courses. Both parents and children were tested on reading and writing; a measure of children's vocabulary development was also taken. The results (Brooks *et al.*, 1996) showed that the programmes had been highly effective in boosting the parents' literacy, the parents' ability to help their children to learn to read and write, and the children's language and literacy. All the gains made during the courses were sustained in the nine months after the courses, and in some areas further progress was made.

Subsequently, the Family Literacy initiative expanded greatly. In 1997, all 22 Local Education Authorities in Wales had the opportunity to implement Family Literacy schemes on the Demonstration Programme model; most courses were English-medium, though a few were Welsh-medium. In England, more than 60 LEAs had received funding for Family Literacy courses. Most of these followed the original model, but in a total of 14 areas three alternative models were being implemented. These focused on: linguistic minority families with children aged 3 to 6; families where the parents had low literacy skills and a child in Year 4; and families where the parents had low literacy skills and a child in Year 7. In late 1996, the Basic Skills Agency commissioned NFER to evaluate these alternative models, and this evaluation was due to be completed in late 1998.

But what had become meanwhile of the participants in the original evaluation? In many cases the impact observed during educational interventions is found to diminish or even vanish afterwards - would this be true of the Family Literacy Demonstration Programmes?

In late 1996, the Basic Skills Agency also commissioned the NFER to investigate this question by re-contacting as many as possible of the parents and children who had taken part in the original evaluation. This follow-up study began in October 1996; data-gathering took place between January and April 1997; and this is the report of that study.

1.2 Aims

The principal aim of this study was to investigate

- the extent to which the gains made by the children during (and in some respects after) their Family Literacy courses had been sustained, and

- the extent to which the courses continued to have an impact on parents helping their children and on parents' employment and continuing education,

in both cases up to Spring 1997.

This aim was pursued both directly, through testing children and interviewing parents, and indirectly, through interviewing the children's class teachers and Demonstration Programme staff.

A subsidiary aim was to lay the foundations for further follow-ups in future years.

1.3 Outline of how the study was carried out

(A full description of how the study was carried out is given in Appendix A.)

During the Spring term of 1997, 154 (43 per cent) of the 361 parents and 237 (60 per cent) of the 392 children from the original Family Literacy evaluation were re-contacted. The children were re-tested; the parents were interviewed about their literacy, about further courses undertaken, and about employment.

The teachers of 99 Family Literacy children were interviewed about those children and about a matched control child for each one. And the Basic Skills and Early Years coordinators (seven in all) of the continuing Demonstration Programmes were re-interviewed, and asked about the programmes' continuing effects on the children and parents who had participated.

1.4 Structure of this report

The main findings on continuing benefits to children are reported in chapter 2, with supporting details given in Appendix B. The findings for parents are reported in chapter 3, and the main findings for both children and parents are summarised in chapter 4.

Throughout this report, any result for which statistical significance is claimed was significant at least at the 5 per cent level ($p<0.05$); that is, the result would be likely to occur by chance only five times in every hundred.

The Continuing Benefits for Children

(Additional details are given in Appendix B.)

2.1 *The context*

The Demonstration Programmes were deliberately sited in areas of multiple deprivation, and the original evaluation duly found that the children who participated had very low average starting scores on the measures used. In both vocabulary and reading, for example, they were on average a complete standard deviation below the national norm. From there, they made substantial gains in vocabulary, reading and writing. It is possible to give a broad idea of the levels of disadvantage in the areas where the family literacy programmes were based. In the four host schools free school meals were taken by the following percentages of children: 44%, 60%, 66% and 70%. This contrasts with a national average of 19%.

The social and educational context changed very little, if at all, between the end of the evaluation (October 1995) and the beginning of this study (January 1997). In these circumstances, the Family Literacy children would have done well to maintain their gains.

2.2 *Vocabulary development and reading attainment*

Data on vocabulary development and reading attainment were collected from 237 children in this follow-up, or 60 per cent of all those who took part in the original evaluation, using the same two standardised tests as before. The objective was to investigate whether the Family Literacy children had maintained or improved or lost the gains they had made during the courses and just afterwards. To establish this, scores from the evaluation and from the follow-up were compared for children for whom scores were available from both studies. Because scores on standardised tests take the children's ages into account, when average standardised scores are compared,

- a significant rise means that the children have made greater progress than would have been expected from normal development (findings of this sort were reported in the original evaluation);
- a non-significant difference means that the children have made 'standard' progress, or maintained their relative position; and
- a significant fall would mean that the children had made less progress than would have been expected.

In general, the results in this study showed that

- **the children had maintained the gains they made during the programmes, both in vocabulary and in reading.**

For example, for the 125 children for whom vocabulary scores were available for 12 weeks after the course in the original evaluation and from this study, the average standardised scores for the two occasions were 96.6 and 95.7 respectively. And for the 91 children for whom reading scores were available for both occasions, the average standardised scores were 94.1 and 95.6 respectively. Neither difference was statistically significant, showing that the Family Literacy children had maintained their relative position.

2.3 *Writing development*

As in the evaluation, children were asked to provide a sample of their writing. The 214 scripts collected were marked both on the seven-stage developmental scale established during the evaluation and on the National Curriculum scale; and a new 12-point scale combining those two scales was developed.

- The results showed that **the children were making steady progress in writing**.

For example, for the 113 children for whom writing scores were available for 12 weeks after the course in the original evaluation and from this study, the average scores for the two occasions were 4.8 and 8.5 respectively, on the new 12-point scale. In the judgment of the researchers involved, this represented standard progress for this group of children given that previous position.

Across the three aspects of language development, therefore, the results showed that

- **the Family Literacy children were holding their own.**

2.4 *Comparisons of attainment of boys and girls*

Comparisons of attainment between boys and girls were made for all three aspects of language development tested. The results showed that boys' and girls' attainments in vocabulary and reading were very similar, but that **girls outperformed boys in writing**.

For example, on the new 12-point scale for writing the average score for the full group of 101 boys was 7.6, while that for the 92 girls was 8.4, and this difference was statistically significant. The average scores for the subsets of boys and girls in Year 2 were almost identical to these. A score of 8.0 represents the mid-point of Level 1 of the National Curriculum, while the national average for the end of Year 2 is the boundary between Levels 2C and 2B (see GB. DfEE, 1996, Annex A, pp.22-3), or about 10.0 on the 12-point scale used here. The girls in this study were therefore as a group closer to the national average than the boys.

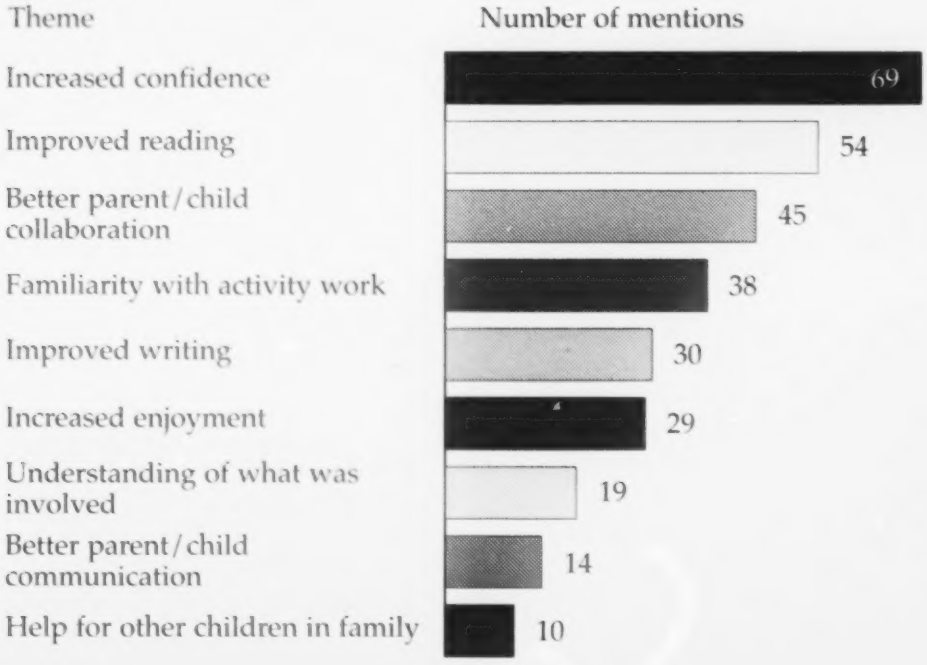
These results suggest that the boys were keeping up in vocabulary and reading, but that many of the boys who had been through Family Literacy continued to need particular help with writing.

2.5 *Parents' views on continuing benefit to their children's development*

Of the 154 parents who were interviewed, 145 (94 per cent) thought that their children were continuing to benefit greatly or to some extent from the programme.

> *Kathryn and David do a lot with me at home. I make the most of every opportunity to do things with them. Kathryn is very confident and outgoing and David is getting there.*
>
> *It boosted her confidence and my awareness of her needs. I don't know how direct it is - the link with the programme - difficult to say. I am more aware. Learning is more fun now at home. Awareness of parent has got to make a difference.*
>
> *She still gets her books out - the alphabet and how to form letters. Before it was just circles, dots and lines. She still has a lot of papers. I still have mine. I use them for my older daughter.*

Figure 2.1: Frequently cited themes in parents' responses on continuing benefit to their children



Note: The overall total is not the sum of the subcategories because parents could make more than one response

Parents were quite reflective in their response to this question, many recognising that they could not simply claim that, because their child had made progress, the benefit should be attributed solely to the course. But many were also able to identify changes of a kind or of a degree that could not simply be attributed to normal developmental progress. Others could make reference to enjoyable collaborative activities that they and their children would not have experienced, or have continued to experience, but for the course.

Where parents did with confidence identify benefit for their children, it was more often in reading ability than in writing. This contrasts their views on the continuing benefit to their own literacy, section 3.4.

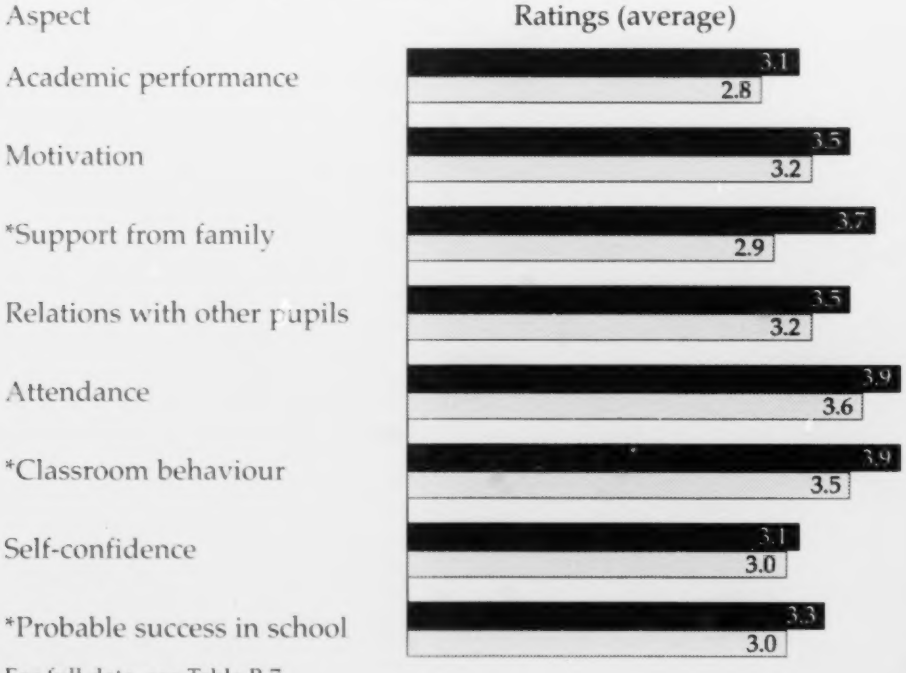
2.6 *Teachers' views*

The interviews with teachers yielded data on 198 children - 99 'Family Literacy plus control' pairs. Of the 198 children, 61 (31 per cent) were at some stage of the Code of Practice for children with Special Educational Needs. This was close to the upper end of the range of estimates of the national percentage (20 to 30 per cent), thus re-emphasising the scale of need in these areas of multiple deprivation. Of these 61 children, 28 were Family Literacy children, 33 were controls. The fact that slightly fewer of the Family Literacy children than of the controls were on some stage of the Code suggests that

- **the Family Literacy children were no more likely than their peers to require special measures**.

The teacher interview schedule asked the teachers to rate their Family Literacy and control pupils on a five-point scale for each of eight aspects of academic performance and inclination. The eight characteristics, and the average ratings for Family Literacy and control children, are shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Teachers' average ratings of Family Literacy and control children on eight achievement-related characteristics



Note: For full data, see Table B.7.

Key: ■ = Family Literacy children; □ = controls
* = statistically significant difference

The results showed that, in their teachers' opinion,

- **Family Literacy children were superior to their peers in the support they received from their families, classroom behaviour, and probable success in school, and**

- **Family Literacy children were equal to their peers in other academic and motivational respects.**

2.7 *Coordinators' views on continuing benefit to the children's development*

On this issue, the coordinators relied on anecdotal references from parents (or, in one case, teachers), from which improvement was noted. Some statements were non-specific such as: *'class teachers have reported good effects on project children'* or *'generally, from talking to parents and teachers, it's made a significant difference'*, whereas, in other instances, more particular indicators were cited. These included, from parents' accounts, the fact that the project children had subsequently shown *'...greater confidence'*, and that they were continuing the 'pro-literacy' activities and attitudes developed on the Programme: *'a love of books, reading stories and making things...'; '... the children enjoyed what they were doing and do it more often at home'*. One coordinator noted that the impact was evident *'.. in their writing, their vocabulary, in their ability to construct things like sentences'*.

Another early years coordinator pinpointed the category of child upon which she felt the programme appeared to have most impact. She suggested it was *'children who are just above the special needs category but are underachieving'* who gained particular benefit, adding *'for those underachieving largely because of the deprivation in the area ... the course provided them with the parental support needed to increase their achievement'*.

Only one coordinator (with an early years role) was able to provide feedback on the children's progress from their teachers. However, she relayed highly positive outcomes, including the fact that teachers noted that the project children were *'far more independent'* on their return to class, *'... have confidence which allows them to get on with tasks'* as well as displaying *'increased motivation'* and *'better behaviour'*.

CHAPTER 3

The Continuing Benefits for Parents

3.1 *The context*

When they entered Family Literacy, very few of the parents were employed outside the home, virtually none were studying, and most had limited qualifications, if any. Research published in 1997 (*It doesn't get any better* by Bynner and Parsons) demonstrated the severe impact of poor basic skills on the lives of 37-year-olds: in particular, those with limited skills were less likely to have a job. In general, they were less likely to be involved in their childen's schools and more likely to be marginalised and to suffer social exclusion.

The original evaluation showed that the parents who participated in Family Literacy had by 1995 already improved their skills and begun to participate more widely in education and society, the form of outcome called for in the *Learning Works* report (Kennedy, 1997). Had they widened their participation still further in the interim?

The findings reported in this chapter are based mainly on the interviews with parents conducted early in 1997, supplemented by a good deal of illuminative evidence from the interviews with programme coordinators.

In the original evaluation (1994/95), 361 parents were studied. Between January and April 1997 it proved possible for the Basic Skills tutors to re-contact 154 (43 per cent) of those parents.

3.2 *Employment*

It was not an aim of the Demonstration Programmes that participating parents should find employment as a result. Any impact here would therefore be a bonus effect. Of the 154 parents re-contacted,

- **66 (43 per cent) were in work in 1997**, as opposed to 29 (19 per cent) when they entered Family Literacy in 1994/95;

and of these 66,

- **57 (86 per cent of those in work) attributed their gaining employment directly to their success on the Family Literacy course.**

In the interviews with coordinators, the final scheduled question covered their knowledge of the proportion of parents who had gained employment. References were made to the largely *'part-time'*, *'casual'* nature of the work that parents subsequently undertook (*'... it's bits here and there'*). However, one respondent did stress that this suited most of them because of child and family commitments.

The other notable trend in coordinators' responses on the issue of subsequent employment was the number of references made to such work being within the arena of school: there were accounts from two of the Programmes that parents were becoming *'dinner ladies'*, *'paid teacher-aides'*, *'classroom assistants'* *'support workers in school'*.

Full-time employment was mentioned as being something which only *'.. very few'* moved on to, and, perhaps significantly, the exceptional case of *'one male success story'* in this area was noted. Another Programme referenced the example of a mother who got work at the nearby theatre after undertaking a make-up course. More generally, one coordinator chose to reiterate the psychological impetus of the Programme which helped parents seek subsequent employment:

> *... maybe it's the confidence, they've had the opportunity so they've gone out and done it. The confidence is, I think, as important as the skills because some of them had skills, but didn't have confidence in themselves and their skills. Now they recognise what they can and can't do, that confidence makes them go out and have a try - whereas before, they were much too anxious to try.*

On the specific issue of proportions gaining employment, two adult coordinators did offer figures: one suggested *'... over half'*, the other reported more specifically that among the original 55 programme participants the number employed had risen from 5 to 15.

Allowing for the fact that the coordinators' knowledge was necessarily less direct than the parents', and that coordinators were trying to answer on the basis of all participants, not just those re-interviewed, the estimates given in this section were broadly consistent with the information gained from the parents.

3.3 Study and qualifications

Of the total of 154 parents re-contacted,

- **92 (60 per cent) had taken at least one further course of study**, whereas none were studying when they entered Family Literacy in 1994/95;

and of these 92,

- **78 (**51 per cent of the total re-contacted) **had achieved a further qualification;** and

- **76 (**49 per cent of the total re-contacted) **intended to continue studying,** of whom **4 hoped to start a degree course**;

and a **further 31 (**20 per cent of the total re-contacted) **hoped to start a course.**

Thus the 'study rate' in this group had risen from zero to 60 per cent. This is contrary to the general findings that participation in learning is related to social class and school leaving age (*The Learning Divide*, Sargant, 1997), and that people are less likely to seek learning opportunities whilst unemployed than when in work (McGivney, 1992, cited in Kennedy, 1997, p.21).

The coordinators were asked about the sort of courses that parents had gone on to, and as one of them noted, there were in effect two distinct routes evident. Parents' subsequent course attendance tended to focus either on a **further aspect of child care/schooling** or on extending **some area of their own education/skills**. Cutting across this dichotomy was another concerning the level of course attended: there were examples of parents taking up other **basic** education/recreational opportunities, while others moved into **advanced** study, some with direct vocational opportunities.

On the route of extending parents' own education or skills, the coordinators mentioned:

- **computing/IT,** e.g. *'... Level 1 computers'*, *'word-processing'*, and in one programme joining a project which involved *'... working on Acorns, in order to work in school with children'*

- **basic skills: maths**, e.g. Numberpower; *'... maths working towards GCSE'*, *'primary maths at the Learning Base'*

- **basic skills: English,** e.g. *'...some English preparation work'*, *'... an English class at the Base and at other schools'*, *'Wordpower to complete certificate or higher levels'*

- **GCSE:** English, maths, sociology and psychology were all referred to

- **higher vocational qualifications,** e.g. Access to Higher Education, A-Level Accountancy, and *' ... a two and a half day, one year Hardware Engineering course'*

- **recreational**, e.g. art/craft courses, dressmaking, women's workshop.

For those parents whose subsequent course attendance related directly to working with children, a range of activity emerged across the Programmes, demonstrating again a continuum from basic to advanced study. There were references to *Parents as Educators* follow-up courses; *Access to Teaching; OCN accreditation for classroom assistants; NNEB courses; NVQ Childcare training;* and in one instance a coordinator referred to a parent who was directly *'.. looking to doing a teaching degree'.*

When asked specifically about the proportions of parents who had gained further qualifications, the coordinators volunteered various figures ranging from *'20 per cent'* through *'over a quarter'* to *'.. over a half'*. However, two of the early years coordinators indicated they were not sure/couldn't say, while two of the adult coordinators raised caveats about the actual question: one suggesting that *'.. many have gone on to other courses, but have not [yet] completed'*. The other pointed out: *'.. it depends what you mean by a qualification ... some of them have been quite different qualifications than others, and some have got more than one'*, a distinction which is clearly borne out by the variety in levels of courses taken up.

On the issue of proportions of parents intending to undertake further courses, the coordinators' estimates ranged between 50 and 70 per cent. They affirmed that parents did talk about taking up courses again *'... after a rest'*, and one reason given for this hiatus was *'... they feel like they want to wait until all their children are in school'*.

Again, given the differences of perspective and of sampling, these estimates are broadly in line with the figures derived from the interviews with parents.

3.4 Literacy

Of the 154 parents re-contacted, 133 (86 per cent) thought that their own reading and writing were continuing to benefit greatly or to some extent from the programme. Within this total, 72 cited greater confidence in their own literacy, 72 cited improvement in their writing, and 33 cited improvement in their reading.

I had done courses before that avoided reading and writing - like cake making and hairdressing - but the course helped me to look at my own writing and to go on to do a basic English course. Since then I have not stopped.

I used to struggle a lot with forms and letters. I used to take them to my mother. Now I just have a go and never think I can't do them.

More confidence in letter writing. I always knew I could do it, but didn't have confidence in my ability - right words, spelling, etc.

Many of the parents responding *No* or *Not a lot* to this question added that they considered their reading and writing skills sufficient at the beginning of the course. This needs to be viewed in the light of the finding that fewer adults report having difficulties than are found from test results to have them (Bynner and Parsons, 1997). And this question also identified a very few parents with minimal literacy skills, and four who said that their literacy improvement had not continued, giving as a possible reason that they did not use these skills at home.

Parents tended to cite benefits to their writing twice as much as to their reading, the reverse of how they assessed benefits for these competences to their children (see Figure 2.1). This may be because of their high initial assessment of their own reading, or because the courses concentrated, at adult level, more on writing than on reading skills, or because the skills themselves are more easily taught, and/or their effects are more easily perceived.

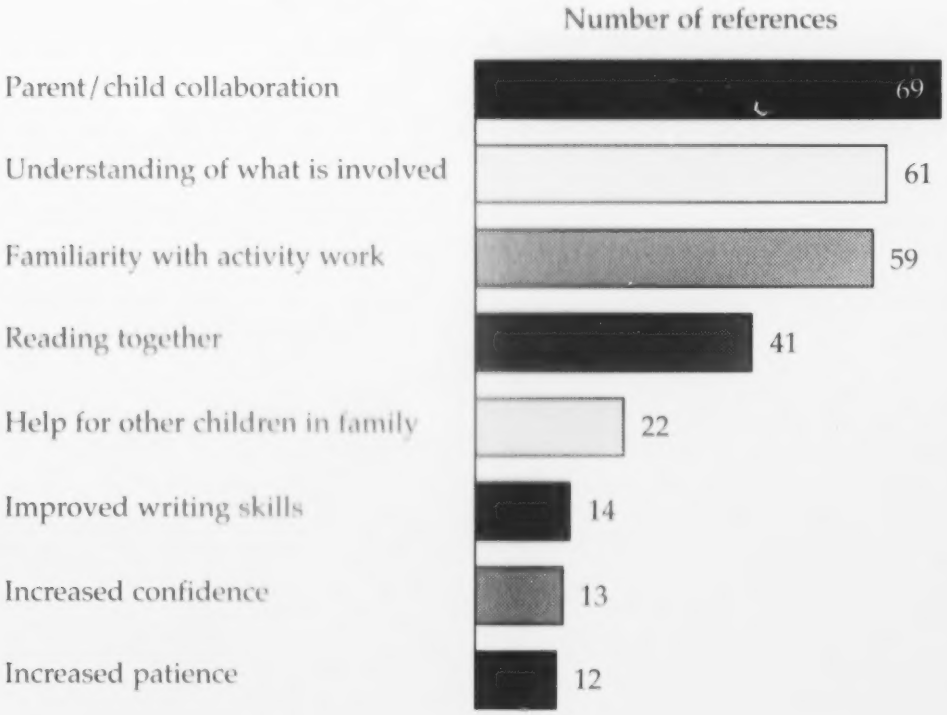
But the feature cited here as often as benefit to writing was *confidence*. One in two of the parents made some reference to confidence, whether the confidence to tackle printed forms, or the confidence to write more personal letters (with an appreciation of the added social access that that offered), or the confidence to continue study or to start work. This was because a boost in self-confidence may have been all that was required, or because the courses gave the parents greater confidence about the benefits that continuing study might offer.

The coordinators generally gave some of their fullest accounts in response to this question of the continuing effects of the Programmes on parent participants. On specifically literacy issues, *'a dramatic effect'* was noted, and there was mention of empowerment to *'help with reading'*; *'confidence..'* to undertake self-expression particularly in writing (examples included letters, writing for a magazine or simply *'putting pen to paper'*); enhanced *'study skills'*; and the drive to *'... work on their own education'*.

3.5 *Ability to help their children*

Of the 154 parents re-contacted, 146 (95 per cent) thought that their ability to help their children with reading and writing was continuing to benefit greatly or to some extent from the programmes. The most frequent themes in their responses are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Frequently cited themes in parents' responses on their ability to help their children



TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMENTS	147
Total number of parents commenting	154

Note: The overall total is not the sum of the subcategories because parents could make more than one response

The parents' responses on this topic emphasised their understanding of the need to join with their children in reading-related activities, and of the need for patience in all of these cooperative learning activities. There were also several references to the benefit to other children in the family.

I understand how they learn. I have more patience with them. I have more ideas of things to do.

It taught me how to sit down with the children, how to explain things to them, how they think. But although I know how to do it, it's hard to get round to it.

I read books to her, and she reads to me. I used to think that they weren't interested in reading, but when I did the course, it taught me how to read a story, and I realised that it was because I wasn't reading it in an interesting way - not that the children weren't interested. I learnt new ways to do things.

The course itself was an eye-opener. The thing that I remember most is just how much children learn when they are playing. That surprised me and made me aware of how much more I need to play with them.

In response to the question asking about the continuing impact of the programmes upon parents' ability to help their children's literacy, the coordinators, in effect, offered three main types of effect:

- a general heightening of literacy and learning awareness within the home;
- the consolidation of activities that more globally reinforce and promote literacy; and
- the activation of more specific literacy pursuits (e.g. library visits).

On the first of these, **a general heightening of literacy and learning awareness**, references were made to *the whole profile of learning being raised within the family*, an increased *valuing of education* and to the modelling which parents' own pursuit of educational courses provided for older children:

the improvement in parents' literacy skills has really had a benefit on their older children as well ... [who] *are seeing their parents enjoying writing and doing those sort of study activities and valuing education, and encouraging them to come on and do the same as well.*

Another comment referred to the fact that parents were now empowered to seek appropriate advice on help with their child's literacy.

Consolidating literacy-reinforcing activities was the second main area of impact cited. Here, the emphasis was on the perpetuation of styles of parent-child interaction learned from the course itself, with enhanced enjoyment as well as the increased quantity of such shared activity noted:

> [the course] *showed them the sorts of things they could do with their younger children, the activities and how their younger children learnt ... they have got more ideas of the sorts of things to do*

> *I think the things they learnt about the usefulness of doing ordinary things with children, but making more of them, you can't unlearn once you know it*

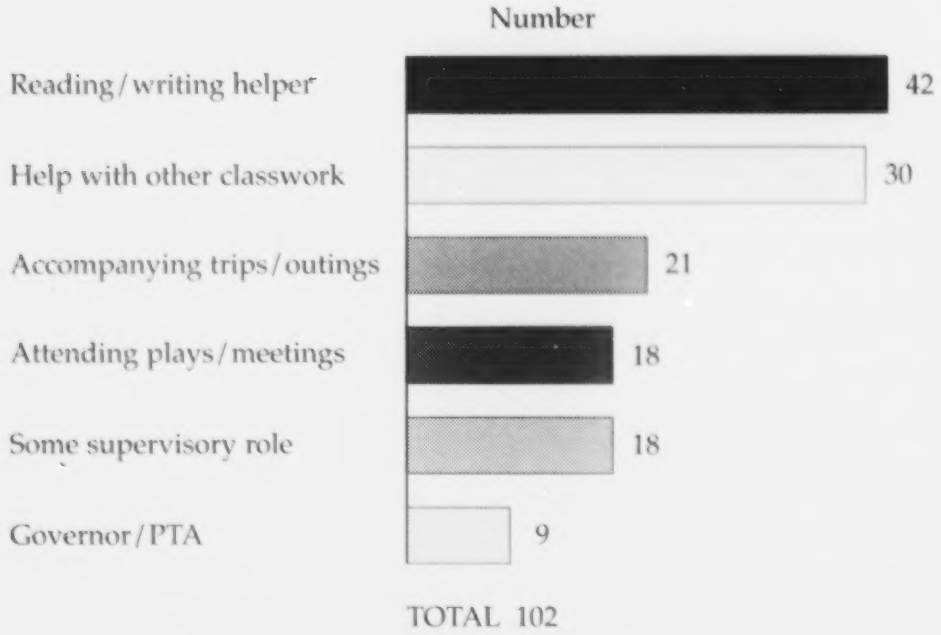
> *They continue to say how much they enjoy working with their children at home.* [They said] *they spend more time with their children.. involving all the children in family tasks like the decorating, shopping and baking.. generally* [it's] *parents having fun with their children.*

The third type of effect on parents' ability to help their children's literacy involved reference to **more specific literacy pursuits**. Two of the coordinators' examples included regular library visits (especially emphasising how the parents were *'thoroughly enjoying that their children want to visit libraries'*), and the ability for parents to now help their children (including older siblings) with problems regarding spelling, punctuation and writing.

3.6 *Involvement with children's schools*

Of the 154 parents re-contacted, 87 (56 per cent) said that they were greatly or to some extent involved with their children's schools, 15 (10 per cent) said their involvement was small, and 52 (34 per cent) denied any involvement. However, within the last group, 36 gave an explanation in terms of a work or study or caring commitment, and only 16 offered no explanation. Three of the explanations for non-involvement concerned the child making better progress in the parent's absence. Figure 3.2 illustrates the range of types of parental involvement in schools.

Figure 3.2: Forms of parents' involvement with their children's schools



Note: The overall total is not the sum of the subcategories because parents could make more than one response

A particularly interesting finding within Figure 3.2 was the number of parents who had become literacy helpers in the classroom - showing not only their increased ability and confidence, but also confidence in them on the part of schools.

> *It's given me more confidence with the teachers. Confidence to join committees and put my ideas over. I'm now a parent governor.*

The teachers who were interviewed about Family Literacy and control children were also asked how involved each child's parents were with the school. Of the 99 Family Literacy children's parents, 62 were said to be involved with their children's schools 'a great deal' or 'to some extent'; the corresponding figure for control children's parents was 33, and this difference was statistically significant. This finding needs to be seen in the context of one reported by Bynner and Parsons (1997): adults with poor basic skills were only one-third as likely as those with good basic skills to be involved with a Parent-Teacher Association.

In the interviews with coordinators the final child-related area of the Programme's continuing impact on parents involved coordinators commenting on the extent to which parents kept up involvement with their child's school. Here again, a range of outcomes emerged, suggesting a continuum which might include:

- further regular individualised child literacy activities within school (e.g. paired reading);
- general classroom assistance, including helping groups of children with reading, writing, computers, art/crafts or assisting on school trips and projects;
- wider contributions to school life (e.g. fund-raising, supporting craft fairs, making home/school packs, attending assemblies); and
- undertaking parent-governor or PTA responsibilities.

While an increase in parents' confidence and also their skill levels were generally felt to account for this escalating involvement and increase in responsibility within school, caveats were raised by the coordinators in some instances. One coordinator suggested attempts to make wider contributions to school life might be inhibited by encountering *'parental cliques'*, and another indicated that being *'tied with younger siblings... '* inevitably limited involvement.

3.7 *Other benefits*

Of the 154 parents re-contacted, 141 (92 per cent) thought that they were continuing to benefit greatly or to some extent from the Programme in other ways. Major themes were

- increased confidence (87 references), usually linked either to a return to study or to work - actual or anticipated;
- better communication skills (60 references), usually linked to an increasing confidence in discussing matters at the children's schools;
- greater understanding of issues related to their children's development (24 references); and

- greater collaboration (21 references), either with their children or through supportive friendships they made during the course.

> *I'm more confident in asking the school more probing questions about Michael. And it has led to my enrolment on courses in Computers and in Numberpower.*

On the programmes' more general continuing impact, the coordinators' portrayals appeared to cover three areas of development, which might be summarised as:

- self-realisation;
- pro-activity; and
- a values shift.

The term '**self-realisation**' attempts to capture the various coordinator accounts of parents' increased confidence and change in self-esteem, with the many references to their subsequent *'new outlook', 'feeling valued', '[being] made aware of their capabilities', '[seeming] more determined'*. One respondent noted that the parents whom she had taught felt particularly that *'... teachers value them too, and value the things they've learned'*. Perhaps related to this new positive self-image, references were made to a flourishing in interpersonal areas: one adult coordinator reported participants stating they had *'... more patience and tolerance'* and another that her parents nominated one particularly significant outcome as the *'lasting friendship groupings that have given a great deal of cohort support'*. Finally, in this area of enhanced interpersonal skills, one particularly *'spectacular example ...'* was offered, with ramifications for pupil outcomes:

> *one mum, prone to violence with staff, now can raise issues sensibly and is willing to listen. Her younger child (in the crèche on the course) is now in reception and there is a marked difference in the two children.*

On the other hand, the second area of self-development for parents, '**pro-activity**', refers to more specific assertive behaviours, with coordinators referring to the parents as now *'not being afraid to have a go at things'* or *'less likely to take no for an answer'* - no doubt motivated by the above-mentioned increase in confidence and feelings of self-worth. As one summarised the impact, *'... they felt* [the programme] *has given them the incentive to go on and do other things'*.

This drive often focused on education: as one coordinator put it, the course provided *'the added oomph'* to use the course *'... as a springboard to other opportunities'*. Another mentioned that the fact that '[the parents] *have continued to go on into other areas of Basic Skills is already a mark of their own self-esteem, their own personal confidence in that they feel they can go and at least try to continue their education'*. Similarly, two other coordinators' answers on the issue of wider types of impact from the programmes referred to parents *'... doing other courses they aren't familiar with'* and *'confidence in unrelated courses'*. A further example of this pro-activity in the arena of self-improvement referred to *'going for jobs - coming in and asking for a reference'*.

More generally, the coordinators referenced parents' new-found capacity to assert themselves in public arenas. This was particularly evident in the area of school:

> *They feel more confident when they're dealing with the school and the teachers, because they've been in that environment and they feel like they know what they're talking about ...*
>
> *I think they are noticeably more confident to deal with people in schools and make the approaches that they need to make to find out what they need to know.*

Pro-activity in other aspects of public life was mentioned. One coordinator speculated: *'... there are quite a lot of people who* [previously] *wouldn't have gone to the library, or to find out about a holiday, or a journey in the railway station'*. Another reported: *'... many* [programme participants] *said they were a little - or a lot! - more pro-active in the community'*, and then went on to quote one parent saying *"I don't worry so much in a new situation - I find it a lot easier"*. The example of programme participants becoming parent governors at school was raised here also.

A final anecdote from an adult coordinator perhaps particularly neatly captures this alchemy of positive attitude and skill acquisition harnessed to the drive for self-enhancement:

> *I've noticed* [this confidence] *when there's been some sort of barrier or an obstacle, when they've been telling me about a course that they wanted to do. For instance, one of them was saying that she was told there was no crèche place, whereas a couple of weeks earlier they'd said there was. So she rang up and said "I was told that there was and* [now] *I can't do the course - I'll write a letter, you're not delivering what you promised". She was confident enough to confront them, and in the end did get a place there ...*

The third area of the programmes' general impact (which was referenced by one early years coordinator) covered the noticeable **values shift** in the programme's participants, with regard to education. She noted: *'... it changes* [their] *ethos'*, and that her parents were generally *'more positive towards education ... they realise "hey, these teachers want the best for my child".'* Thus, because of this values shift, the coordinator suggested that *'the worth of the home/school link'* was developed.

3.8 General comments

It seems best to end this chapter by letting the parents speak for themselves through some of their diverse answers to the question 'Are there any other comments you would like to make?', each of which identifies at least one attribute of the course that they felt worthy of especial emphasis.

If anyone stops funding the course, send them round to me! It has to be worth it to have had such an effect on mums and dads and children, even if they [the mums or dads] don't carry on themselves. Dale was in the crèche. Now he always wants to do things. I let him get on with it and then let him build on it.

The course should be compulsory for all parents. It's a very positive experience for parents and for children. It made me aware of the importance of parents in a child's education. I'd never have carried on with my own education if the PACT course hadn't stimulated me.

[From a self-identified 'not a good reader'] *When they advertised it, they made it seem mainly for adults. But it's not just about adult literacy. It is about children - all the different ways to do things. In the advertising it doesn't come over strong enough what it's all about.*

Doing the course helped a lot - gave me ***lots*** *of confidence. That is still true now. I carried on with a Working Together course, and now I'm doing a GCSE in Childcare/Development.*

Without this course I would not have had the confidence to go back to College and to gain employment in something I love doing. My children are doing really well as I am more interested in education and this has rubbed off on them. Now I see school as a pleasure, not as a pressure.

She has become much more confident and interested in her school life. My interest and confidence seems to have rubbed off on her, and on my younger son who now attends the school. He had a bit of a ropey start at school. I was in a position to help him very positively because of the knowledge I'd gained on the FLT course.

Summary and Conclusions

4.1 Continuing benefits for the children

The 237 Family Literacy children re-contacted had maintained the gains made during the courses in vocabulary, reading and writing.

The boys studied in the follow-up were keeping up with the girls in vocabulary and reading, but the girls outperformed them in writing

The parents and the Demonstration Programme coordinators were strongly of the opinion that the children were continuing to benefit.

The interviews with teachers showed that

- **Family Literacy children were superior to their peers in the support they received from their families, classroom behaviour, and probable success in school; and**
- **Family Literacy children were equal to their peers in other academic and motivational respects.**

Thus overall

- **the Family Literacy children were at least holding their own, and their educational prospects were better than they would have been without Family Literacy.**

4.2 Continuing benefits for the parents

Of the 154 parents re-contacted,

- **66 (43 per cent) were in work in 1997**, up from 29 (19 per cent) in 1994/95;

and of these 66,

- **57 (86 per cent of those in work) attributed their gaining employment directly to Family Literacy.**

Of the full group of 154,

- **92 (60 per cent) had taken at least one further course of study**, whereas none were studying in 1994/95;

and of these 92,

- **78** (51 per cent of the total) **had achieved a further qualification;** and
- **76** (49 per cent of the total) **intended to continue studying;**

and a **further 31** (20 per cent of the total) **hoped to start a course.**

Thus **the 'study rate' in this group had risen from zero to 60 per cent, and many had gained qualifications.**

The interviews with coordinators showed that the parents' courses tended to focus either on a **further aspect of child care/schooling** or on extending **some area of their own education/skills.**

Of the 154 parents re-contacted,

- 133 **(86 per cent) thought that their own reading and writing were continuing to benefit** from Family Literacy; and
- 146 **(95 per cent) thought that their ability to help their children with reading and writing was continuing to benefit.**

The interviews with coordinators showed that these benefits arose from three main sources:

- a general **heightening of literacy and learning awareness** within the home;
- the consolidation of **activities that reinforced and promoted literacy** in the home; and
- more specific **literacy pursuits** (e.g. library visits).

Of the 154 parents re-contacted,

- **87 (56 per cent) said that they were involved with their children's schools;**

and of these

- **42 (48 per cent of those involved with schools) had become literacy helpers in the classroom.**

The interviews with teachers showed that the rate of involvement of Family Literacy parents with their children's schools was **double that of parents of children in a control group**.

Of the 154 parents re-contacted, 141 (92 per cent) thought that they were continuing to **benefit from Family Literacy in other ways**, especially in **increased confidence** and in **better communication skills.**

Therefore the parents continued to benefit in employment, study, qualifications, literacy, ability to help their children, and involvement with their children's schools.

And overall,

Family Literacy parents continued to widen their participation in education and in society generally.

Overall conclusion: this follow-up study shows that the Family Literacy children have successfully maintained the gains they made during the courses, and that the parents have continued to widen their participation in education and society.

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How the Study was Carried Out - full description

A.1 Timing and forms of data gathered

The parents and children were re-contacted during the Spring term of 1997; this was between 20 and 34 months after the end of their courses. When they had started their courses in 1994/95, the children were aged between 3 years 0 months (3:00) and 6:11; at the time of this follow-up they were aged between 4:11 and 9:09. The greater age-range at this follow-up than in the original evaluation has two sources: the follow-up data were gathered over a period of four months; and the original data were gathered on four 'cohorts' of children, at dates between April 1994 and April 1995.

The following forms of data were gathered:

- Children who had taken part in the evaluation were re-tested on vocabulary, reading and writing. These measures were intended to provide direct, quantitative estimates of the extent to which the gains made during the programmes had been sustained;

- The class teachers of a subsample of the Family Literacy children were interviewed about those children and, for each of them, about a control child in the same class. The control child was the child of the same sex from the same class who had the nearest date of birth to the Family Literacy child. The purpose of interviewing class teachers about a subsample of the Family Literacy children and about controls was to establish the extent to which Family Literacy children differed from their peers on a set of measures of educational motivation and attitude. A similar methodology has been employed in a long-term study of Even Start Family Literacy initiatives in the United States (Hayes, 1997);

- Parents who had taken part in the evaluation were interviewed about their literacy, about further courses undertaken, and about employment;

– Demonstration Programme coordinators were interviewed.

[Copies of the Interview schedules used with the parents, teachers and coordinators are available on request from NFER].

The follow-up was therefore less complex in design than the evaluation. Background information on the parents and children was available from the evaluation, and did not need to be collected again. Since the courses were over, no observations of teaching sessions were possible. No information on literacy-related home activities was sought by questionnaire, and no re-testing of parents was carried out, since either of these would have significantly increased the difficulty of gathering interview data from parents. The information sought this time was gathered once only, compared with up to four times during the evaluation.

However, the opportunity was taken to gather more plentiful information on the children than in the evaluation, though without greatly increasing the testing burden on each child.

A.2 Target samples

During the four terms of the original evaluation, the total numbers of participants were 361 parents and 392 children. The target samples for this follow-up were as follows.

– For data on children's vocabulary, reading and writing: all the children who could be traced and who had not moved away;

– For gathering data about children from interviews with class teachers: as many as possible of the 125 children who were tested at the 9-month follow-up in the evaluation, and an equal number of controls. The purpose of selecting this group of Family Literacy children for this aspect of the follow-up was to continue to gather the maximum amount of information on the children for whom the most plentiful data were already available;

– For parent interviews: all the parents who could be traced and who had not moved away;

– For coordinator interviews: the Basic Skills and Early Years coordinators for each continuing Demonstration Programme.

A.3 Achieved samples

The achieved samples were as shown in Table A.1.

Table A.1: Achieved samples

	Number achieved	Number possible	Response rate (%)
Child test data	237	392	60%
Teacher interviews	*(99 + 99 =) 198	250	79%
Parent interviews	154	361	43%
Coordinator interviews	7	7	100%

*Teachers were interviewed about equal numbers of Family Literacy and control children.

The achieved samples for coordinator and teacher interviews were satisfactory.

The achieved samples for re-testing children and for parent interviews were lower in percentage terms, but the circumstances need to be taken into account. Some families had moved away, and were either untraceable or had moved so far that it was impracticable to visit them. When parents and children were located and accessible, it was still necessary to gain permission to re-interview or re-test them, and find mutually agreeable times to do so, including gaining schools' collaboration in the case of the children. And this part of the work had to be carried out by programme staff and fitted into their existing commitments. One interviewer described her experience like this:

> *I phoned people, wrote to them, and pounced on them at Open Evenings. I hung round school gates, traced one parent to the fish counter at a supermarket and jumped out of the car when I spotted one ex-student as a lollipop lady.*

Given all this, the numbers of parents and children re-contacted were as large as could be managed. Though not high in percentage terms, the numbers were large enough to provide a basis for analysis and comment, especially since each participant in this follow-up was being compared with his or her own earlier self.

A.4 Testing the children

During the Spring term of 1997 as many as possible of the children from the original evaluation were re-tested. In that evaluation,

- in principle all children, even 3-year-olds, were asked to provide samples of emergent or early writing

- those aged 4:00 and over were asked to take the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - Revised, Form L (PPVT)*

- those aged 5:00 and over were asked to take the *Reading Recognition subtest* of the *Peabody Individual Achievement Tests (PIAT)*.

Children who did not provide a particular form of evidence at the beginning of the course were not asked to do so at any subsequent point.

By the end of the data-gathering stage of this follow-up in April 1997, even the youngest of those who participated in the Summer term of 1995 were turning 5, and therefore eligible to provide all three forms of data. In principle, therefore, all the children re-contacted were asked to provide all three forms of data, whether or not they had provided all three during the evaluation. It was clearly useful to collect repeat data from children who had taken the various tests, but it is necessary to justify doing so from those who had not. The purpose of doing so on this occasion was to lay as wide a foundation as possible for further potential follow-ups in later years, and to avoid as far as possible the problem of 'attrition', that is loss of subjects from the group of interest.

The re-testing of the children was carried out by the Early Years teachers in the continuing Demonstration Programmes. Several of these teachers had been trained during the evaluation to administer the Peabody tests, and four more were so trained for this follow-up. The training was again conducted by Dr Peter Shepherd and Dr Kate Smith of the Social Statistics Research Unit at City University, London.

The gathering of data on vocabulary, reading and writing was the only repeated testing that the children were asked to undergo directly and specifically for this project; the data gathered from teachers (see section A.6 below) did not require direct access to children.

A.5 Interviewing the parents

Basic Skills tutors from the continuing Development Programmes contacted and interviewed, either by telephone or in person, as many as possible of the parents who participated in the programmes in the four terms of the original evaluation, and supplied the results to the NFER for analysis. The interview schedule used was devised by the NFER team, and is available on request from NFER. All the questions initially demanded a *yes/no* response. Those that dealt with children and schools sought a further categorisation of *yes* responses on a scale: *a lot/to some extent/not very much*. All of the questions sought, wherever possible, further explanatory details about the parents' responses. The schedule was designed to take no more than five minutes to administer, and focused on

- the parents' views on the continuing impact of the programmes on their literacy and life skills, including their confidence, their ability to help their children to learn to read and write, and their attitudes to their children's education;

- any further courses they had undertaken and any qualifications and employment they had gained since the end of their participation in Family Literacy.

The measures of interest here would be the extent to which parents thought their own literacy and other skills, their ability to help their children, and their attitudes to their children's education continued to show the benefit of the courses, and the proportions who had taken further courses and/or gained qualifications or employment.

A.6 Interviewing the teachers

Three members of the NFER research team interviewed the class teachers of a subsample of the Family Literacy children. The interview schedule, which was based on one used in the USA (Hayes, 1997), is available on request from NFER. It was short, contained a small number of background questions, and consisted mainly of indicators of children's educational attainment and attitude, for example their attendance record and probable success in school; on each of these the teacher was asked to say where, in his or her opinion, the Family Literacy child and the control child fell on a five-point scale from 'well below average for the class' to 'well above average for the class'.

The purpose of interviewing teachers about control children as well as those involved in Family Literacy was to control the 'generosity error' often found in teachers' ratings of pupils. The dependent variables would be any differences in average scores on the various scales between Family Literacy and control children. Also, the control children would provide an explicit control group of a type which was not available in the original evaluation. Then, it was argued (see Brooks *et al.*, 1996, 133-4) that for the Peabody tests the nationally representative sample on whom they had been standardised constituted an implicit control group, and this position is maintained here. However, for this follow-up the particular teacher interview methodology adopted provided the opportunity to recruit an explicit control group, and this opportunity was taken.

It was not possible to conceal from the teachers interviewed which of their pupils were Family Literacy children and which were not. This was mainly because most of the children concerned were pupils in the schools where the Demonstration Programmes had had their principal sites, and knowledge about the programmes and about the children attending them had been shared. However, the interviewers conducted the interviews in such a way that they did not reveal the distinction within the interview itself.

A.7 Interviewing Programme coordinators

In the Spring of 1997, seven coordinators (three with Basic Skills and four with Early Years briefs) from the four original Demonstration Programmes were interviewed by members of the NFER research team. The semi-structured interview schedule used was devised by the NFER team, and is available on request from NFER.

The interviews sought to garner the coordinators' perspectives on a number of specific issues concerning the continuing impact and outcomes of the programmes on both parent and child participants. The questions covered several main areas of inquiry, asking for the coordinators' views and knowledge about:

- the programmes' continuing effects on the literacy of the children who participated, and any feedback received from school on their progress;
- the continuing impact of the programmes upon the parents' ability to help their children's literacy and also subsequent parental involvement in school;

- the continuing impact of the programmes on parents' literacy and on other aspects of their lives; and
- subsequent uptake by parents with regard to course attendance, qualifications, employment, or intentions to take further courses.

In addition, the interview provided an opportunity for the co-ordinators to reflect more generally on the programmes.

A.8 Preparation for further follow-ups

Finally, while this study was being carried out, preparations were made for any further follow-ups that might be envisaged. As already mentioned, all the Family Literacy children re-contacted were tested on vocabulary, reading and writing. The resulting database of test scores for 237 children on vocabulary and reading, and 214 children on writing, forms a wider basis for any further follow-up than was available (at least for reading and writing) on this occasion. In addition, careful note was taken of the children's schools and classes, and this information, together with that from the parent and coordinator interviews, was placed in a secure archive.

The Continuing Benefits for Children - additional detail

B.1 Vocabulary and reading tests

The tests used to gather data on the children's vocabulary and reading development were the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (PPVT) and the *Reading Recognition subtest* of the *Peabody Individual Achievement Tests* (PIAT), respectively. These were the same tests that had been used in the original evaluation. When administered, both Peabody tests yield raw scores which then have to be converted into standardised scores for meaningful statistical analysis. In 1994/95, when data on these tests were gathered for the evaluation, no official British standardisation of these US tests existed. However, a large database for both tests was available, in the form of the raw scores from the fifth sweep of the National Child Development Study (NCDS5). That database was used by the NFER statisticians to calculate an in-house standardisation of the two tests for the age-range of children involved in the evaluation (4:00-6:11 for the PPVT, 5:00-6:11 for the PIAT), and this was used to calculate standardised scores for the children who had taken the tests in the evaluation.

Subsequently, the researchers at City University, London, in charge of NCDS5 produced the official standardisation of the two tests. In 1997, therefore, in calculating standardised Peabody scores the NFER team was faced with a choice: either to extend the original in-house standardisation up to age 9:09, or to obtain and use the official standardisation. For the sake of both economy of effort and comparability with any other projects which might use the NCDS5 standardisation it was decided to use the latter. The 1997 data were therefore standardised solely in this way.

However, this meant that the evaluation data had been standardised slightly differently, and could not be directly compared with the 1997 data. Accordingly, standardised scores for the 1994/95 data were re-calculated, also using the NCDS5 standardisation.

B.2 Vocabulary development

Test data on the PPVT were collected from 237 children in this follow-up, or 60 per cent of all those who took part in the original evaluation. The average standardised score for the complete follow-up sample was 92.0, with a standard deviation of 16.0. The average score was thus about one half of one standard deviation below the national average of 100. However, this figure says nothing about whether the Family Literacy children had maintained or improved or lost the gains they had made during the courses. To establish this, it was necessary to look at children for whom scores were available both from the evaluation and from the follow-up. Comparisons were therefore made between the follow-up and all four of the occasions on which data were collected during the evaluation, namely:

- the beginning of the course
- the end of the course
- 12 weeks after the end of the course
- 9 months after the end of the course.

The results of this procedure are shown in Table B.1, which is to be read as follows:

- Considering first the top line of numerical data: there were 178 children for whom PPVT scores were available both for the beginning of their original course and from this follow-up. At the beginning of their courses, those 178 children had an average standardised PPVT score of 92.5; in the follow-up those same children's average standardised PPVT score was 94.1;

- Similarly, there were 175 children for whom PPVT scores were available both for the end of their original course and from this follow-up. At the end of their courses, those 175 children had an average standardised PPVT score of 95.6; in the follow-up those same children's average standardised PPVT score was 93.1. And so on.

The same manner of interpretation applies also to Tables B.2, B.3 and B.5.

Table B.1: Children's listening vocabulary (PPVT) scores: comparisons between the follow-up and the four data-collection occasions of the evaluation

	N	Standardised PPVT scores			
		Evaluation data		Follow-up data	
		average	(s.d.)	average	(s.d.)
Comparison between follow-up and					
- beginning of course	178	92.5	(11.3)	94.1	(14.1)
- end of course	175	95.6	(11.3)	93.1	(14.5)
- 12 weeks after course	125	96.6	(12.2)	95.7	(14.1)
- 9 months after course	73	95.1	(12.2)	96.2	(12.9)

N.B. National average = 100.0; national s.d. = 15.0

Key: N = sample size; s.d. = standard deviation

The differences between the follow-up and the results for the beginning of the course and 12 weeks and 9 months after it were non-significant. However, the difference between the follow-up and the end of the course was statistically significant (p=0.012), in favour of the end of the course. In isolation, this might be taken to mean that the sample as a whole had lost some of the gains made during the courses. In the context of the other findings, however, it is more likely to mean that *some* of the children had lost some of the gains. On the whole, these results indicated that most children had sustained the improvement in vocabulary development made during the courses.

B.3 Reading attainment

Test data on the PIAT were collected from the same 237 children as for the PPVT. The average standardised score for the complete follow-up sample was 95.7, with a standard deviation of 16.1. The average score was about a third of one standard deviation below the national average of 100. Comparisons with the evaluation, arrived at in the same way as for the PPVT, are shown in Table B.2.

Table B.2: Children's reading (PIAT) scores: comparisons between the follow-up and the four data-collection occasions of the evaluation

	N	Standardised PIAT scores			
		Evaluation data		Follow-up data	
		average	(s.d.)	average	(s.d.)
Comparison between follow-up and					
- beginning of course	107	89.6	(11.5)	93.6	(15.2)
- end of course	117	92.5	(11.8)	94.1	(14.9)
- 12 weeks after course	91	94.1	(11.3)	95.6	(15.4)
- 9 months after course	69	91.3	(12.3)	93.5	(13.8)

N.B. National average = 100.0; national s.d. = 15.0

Key: N = sample size; s.d. = standard deviation

The differences between the follow-up and the results for the end of the course and 12 weeks and 9 months after it were non-significant. However, the difference between the follow-up and the beginning of the course was statistically significant (p=0.001), in favour of the follow-up. The interpretation of these results is straightforward: the children still showed the improvement in reading made during the course, and had held their own since then.

B.4 Writing development

As in the evaluation, children were asked to provide a sample of their writing. For those still at early stages of writing development, the request was phrased in the same way as in the evaluation, namely that they should produce

- a few lines or a sentence if they could
- if not, then their own name and some other letters
- if not that then letter-like forms or scribbles

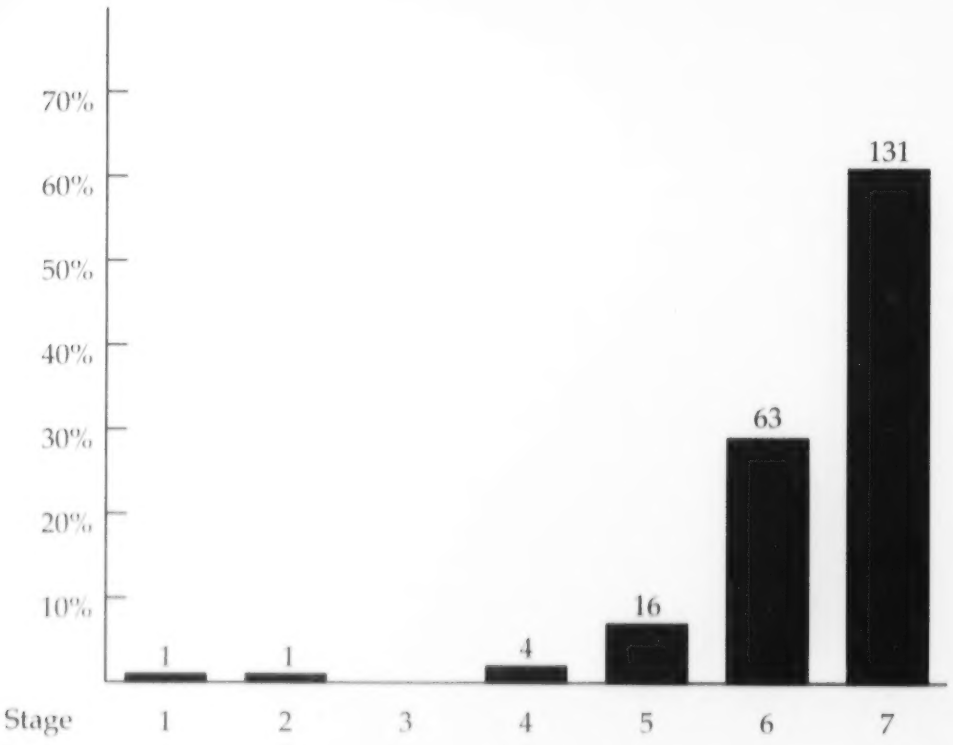
- if not that then a copy of a few words
- and if not that then a drawing.

By the time of the follow-up, very few children were still at the less skilled stages of this list of tasks. On the other hand, many were beyond the top point, and well able to produce structured texts of some length; they were encouraged to do so. In the evaluation, all the scripts produced could be assessed on the 7-stage scale developed for the purpose (see Brooks *et al.*, 1996: 38; and for more detail, Gorman and Brooks, 1996), and a reasonably normal distribution resulted. For the follow-up, it was clear that many children would be at the last stage (7) of that scale, and that some addition to it would be needed to continue to provide differentiation, and therefore to provide an adequate measure of progress. This could have been done by extending the scale, that is by defining stages 8 and onwards. But most of the children would also be in school, and being assessed on the National Curriculum scale by teachers and, in some cases, through the national tests for the end of key stage 1. In order to provide comparability with both the evaluation and National Curriculum assessments, therefore, it was decided to

- keep the existing 7-stage scale as it was, initially
- assess all scripts on that scale, even though this meant that a large proportion of the children would be bunched towards the top
- assess all scripts also on levels W (working towards level 1) to 3 of the National Curriculum scale, including the C-A subscale within level 2
- report and compare both assessments
- investigate the feasibility of combining the two scales.

In the follow-up, writing assessments were available for 216 children. The distribution of assessments on the 7-stage scale and on the National Curriculum scale are shown in Figures B.1 and B.2 respectively.

Figure B.1: Children's writing development: distribution across developmental stages



Total number of children: 216

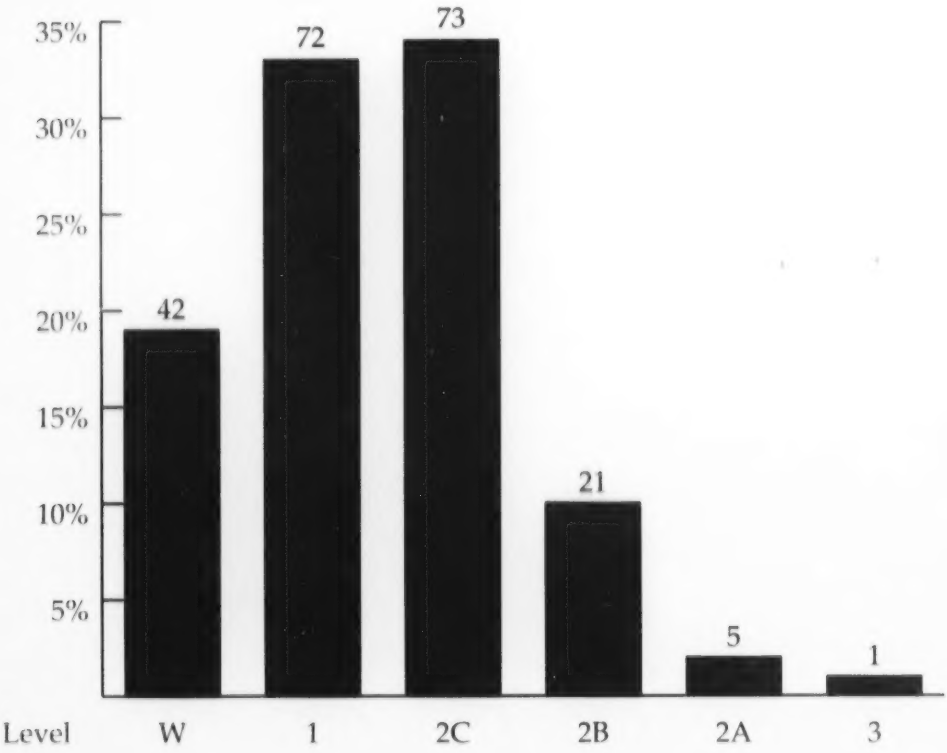
Average 6.5 (s.d.) (0.9)

Key: s.d. = standard deviation

Note: The numbers above the bars are the numbers of children at each stage

As expected, the scores on the developmental scale were bunched towards the top, though the presence of even a few children at the earlier stages showed that they were finding it very difficult to progress with writing. The fact that the average score on this scale was so near the maximum meant that direct comparisons with the results from the evaluation would be of limited value, if based on this scale alone, because many children would have little room to show the full extent of the progress they had made meanwhile.

Figure B.2: Children's writing development: distribution across National Curriculum levels



Total number of children: 214

Average 1.3 (s.d.) (0.8)

Note: National Curriculum levels were missing for 2 children

Key: s.d. = standard deviation; W = working towards level 1

Note: The numbers above the bars are the numbers of children at each level

The distribution on the National Curriculum scale, by contrast, was skewed towards the lower end. The average score (and standard deviation) shown in Figure B.2 were calculated by imputing the following arithmetic values to the levels:

W = 0; 1 = 1; 2C = 2; 2B = 2.3; 2C = 2.7; 3 = 3

This set of values for the levels, including the subpoints within level 2, has been used in other NFER projects. The resulting 'average' of 1.3 confirmed the bunching of scores at the lower end.

The children's average scores for writing on the 7-stage scale, with comparisons with the evaluation, are shown in Table B.3. This Table needs to be interpreted in the same way as Tables B.1 and B.2.

Table B.3: Children's writing scores: comparisons between the follow-up and the four data-collection occasions of the evaluation, on the developmental scale

	N	Writing scores			
		Evaluation data		Follow-up data	
		average	(s.d.)	average	(s.d.)
Comparison between follow-up and					
- beginning of course	181	3.5	(1.6)	6.5	(0.9)
- end of course	162	4.2	(1.6)	6.5	(0.9)
- 12 weeks after course	109	4.8	(1.4)	6.7	(0.8)
- 9 months after course	62	5.4	(1.3)	6.7	(0.7)

Key: N = sample size; s.d. = standard deviation

These results again showed considerable bunching at the upper end of the scale for the follow-up; the amount of progress made by the children was therefore potentially underestimated. National Curriculum levels, on the other hand, could not be compared directly with the evaluation results. In order to overcome this, and allow more valid comparisons, the possibility was investigated of producing a composite scale embracing both the developmental stages and National Curriculum levels. First, a matrix of the two forms of evidence from the follow-up was produced, and this is shown in Table B.4.

Table B.4: Children's writing: matrix of developmental stages against National Curriculum levels

	National Curriculum levels						
	W	1	2C	2B	2A	3	
Developmental stage	Numbers of children						Total
7	1	34	69	21	5	1	131
6	20	38	4				62
5	16						16
4	4						4
3							0
2	1						1
1							0
Total	42	72	73	21	5	1	214

Most of the cells in the matrix were, correctly, empty, and none of the children whose developmental stage was below 6 were classified as having reached NC level 1. There was some overlap between stages 6 and 7 on the one hand and levels W, 1 and 2C on the other. However, from these results it appears that the main progression was

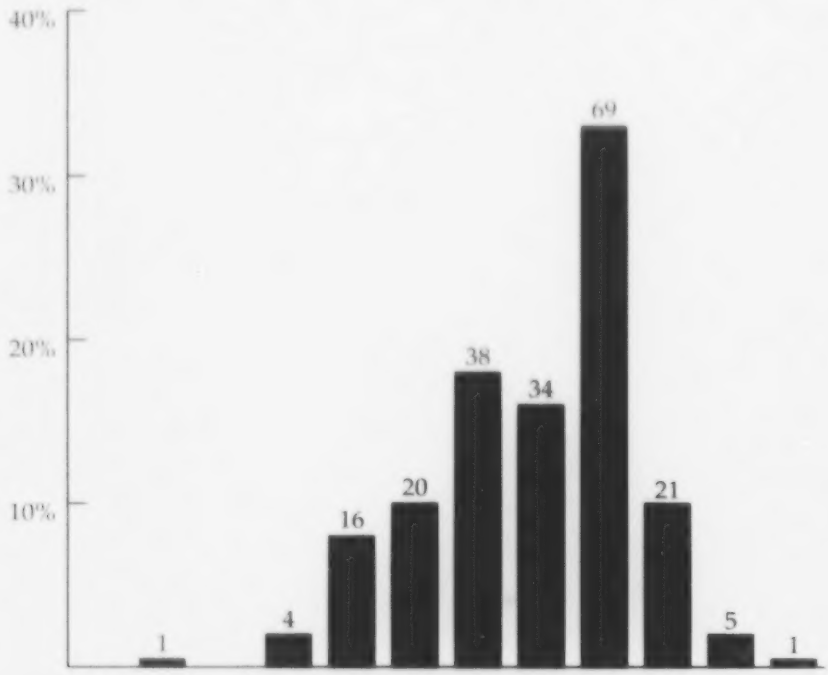
- from being at stage 6 but still working towards level 1,
- through still being at stage 6 but already within level 1,
- to being at stage 7 and still within level 1.

If this sequence is taken to be the main route of progression then only five children fell outside it. Also, it was the judgment of the researcher involved in assessing the scripts that there was a genuinely developmental progression through the main sequence as just defined. Accordingly it was decided to combine the two scales by dropping the five children whose scores fell outside the main sequence, and creating a 12-point scale with the following values attributed to the points of the main sequence:

- stages 1-5 of the developmental scale: 1-5
- at stage 6 but still working towards level 1: 6
- at stage 6 but already within level 1: 7
- at stage 7 and still within level 1: 8
- levels 2C, 2B, 2A, 3: 9, 10, 11, 12, respectively.

There seemed no rationale for attributing non-integer values to any of these points when merging the two scales, and all the values used were therefore whole numbers. This produced the distribution shown in Figure B.3.

Figure B.3: Children's writing: distribution of scores on merged scale



Point on merged scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Equivalents on previous scales	1	2	3	4	5	6/W	6/1	7/1	2C	2B	2A	3

Total number of children: 209 Average 7.9 (s.d.) (1.7)

Key: s.d. = standard deviation; W = working towards level 1

Note: The numbers above the bars are the numbers of children at each stage

Comparisons between scores on the merged scale and the evaluation data were then carried out, and the results are shown in Table B.5, which is to be interpreted in the same way as Tables B.1-B.3.

Table B.5: Average scores for children's writing: comparisons between the follow-up and the four data-collection occasions of the evaluation, on the merged scale

	N	Writing scores			
		Evaluation data		Follow-up data	
		average	(s.d.)	average	(s.d.)
Comparison between follow-up and					
- beginning of course	175	3.4	(1.6)	8.0	(1.7)
- end of course	170	4.2	(1.6)	8.0	(1.7)
- 12 weeks after course	113	4.8	(1.4)	8.5	(1.6)
- 9 months after course	66	5.3	(1.3)	8.5	(1.6)

Key: N = sample size; s.d. = standard deviation

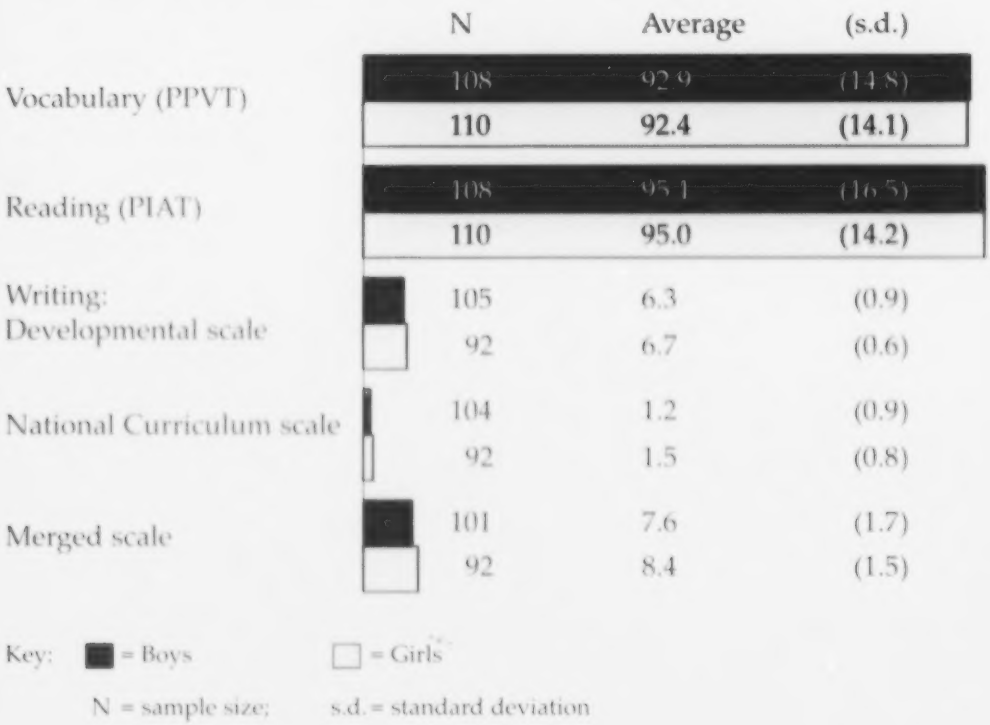
In every case, these results showed substantial progress between the evaluation and this follow-up. In writing, as in vocabulary and reading, it seems that these Family Literacy children were at least maintaining the gains made during the course, and not slipping back.

B.5 Comparisons of attainment of boys and girls

Comparisons of attainment between boys and girls were made for both of the Peabody tests and for writing, and, within writing, on all three scales used. Information on their gender could not be retrieved for 19 children. Results for the rest are given in Figure B.4.

Neither of the comparisons for the Peabody tests was significant, but all three of those for writing were. However, this pattern of differences does broadly correspond to that found for children in Years 6 and 11 in the national surveys undertaken by the Assessment of Performance Unit Language Monitoring Project between 1979 and 1988 (see Gorman *et al.*, 1988, 1991, and other references given there).

Figure B.4: Comparisons of attainment of boys and girls



B.6 Teachers' views

The total number of teachers interviewed was 37. Data were gathered through the teacher interviews on 198 children - 99 'Family Literacy plus control' pairs. For 90 of the pairs the teacher interviewed was the class teacher, for eight pairs, a former class teacher, and for the last pair, the Headteacher, who was also the Special Educational Needs Coordinator for the school. The teachers' lengths of teaching experience ranged from one to 27 years, with one 'outlier' at 32 years, and with two concentrations: between one and five years, and between 20 and 22 years.

For seven pairs, the teacher had been teaching them since the beginning of the term in January 1997; for 84 pairs, since the beginning of the school year in September 1996; and for nine pairs, since before the beginning of that school year. It could therefore be assumed in almost every case that the teacher knew the children well enough, and had sufficient experience, to answer the questions with confidence.

Of the 99 pairs of children, 38 were males, 61 females. (By design, there were no mixed pairs.) The number of children who were said to be at some stage of the Code of Practice for Children with Special Educational Needs was 61, distributed as shown in Table B.6.

Table B.6: Children with Special Educational Needs, teacher interview sample

Stage of Code of Practice	Family Literacy children	Control children	Total
1	8	7	15
2	9	11	20
3	6	10	16
4	1	2	3
5	4	3	7
Total	28	33	61

The fact that slightly fewer of the Family Literacy children than of the controls were on some stage of the Code showed that the Family Literacy children were at least no more likely than their peers to require special measures. The Family Literacy children on average also seemed to be bunched slightly lower on the scale than the controls. Also revealing was the fact that 31 per cent of all these children were on some stage of the Code, thus re-emphasising the scale of need in these areas of multiple deprivation.

The main section of the teacher interview schedule asked the teachers to rate their Family Literacy and control pupils on eight aspects of academic performance and inclination. For each aspect, and using the other children in the class as a reference, the pupil was rated on the following five-point scale:

1. Much below other children
2. Somewhat below other children
3. About the same as other children
4. Somewhat above other children
5. Much above other children

The results of this rating exercise were as shown in Table B.7. For each rated aspect, the distribution of ratings for Family Literacy children is shown in the upper row, and that for controls in the lower row. The total number of

children in each row is 99. The average ratings for Family Literacy and control children are also shown graphically in Figure 2.2.

On every aspect, the average rating for Family Literacy children was higher than that for the controls, and the difference proved to be statistically significant in three cases - support from family, classroom behaviour and probable success in school. This procedure therefore showed a few differences between the groups, in favour of the Family Literacy children, and in general that the Family Literacy children were keeping up with their peers.

Table B.7: Teachers' complete ratings of Family Literacy and control children on eight achievement-related characteristics

		Ratings						
Aspect		1	2	3	4	5	mean	(s.d.)
Academic performance	FL	7	25	26	31	10	3.1	(1.1)
	Co	14	22	38	18	7	2.8	(1.1)
Motivation	FL	4	13	31	36	15	3.5	(1.0)
	Co	7	17	39	23	13	3.2	(1.1)
*Support from family	FL	3	5	27	44	20	3.7	(0.9)
	Co	14	20	39	17	9	2.9	(1.1)
Relations with other pupils	FL	1	13	44	27	14	3.5	(0.9)
	Co	3	12	50	29	5	3.2	(0.8)
Attendance	FL	2	6	32	17	42	3.9	(1.1)
	Co	2	13	31	26	27	3.6	(1.1)
*Classroom behaviour	FL	0	10	22	33	34	3.9	(1.0)
	Co	4	11	33	29	22	3.5	(1.1)
Self-confidence	FL	1	36	27	25	9	3.1	(1.0)
	Co	8	30	27	25	9	3.0	(1.1)
*Probable success in school	FL	5	16	34	34	10	3.3	(1.0)
	Co	10	24	34	22	9	3.0	(1.1)

Key: FL = Family Literacy children; Co = controls; s.d. = standard deviation;
* = statistically significant difference

A study using essentially the same teacher interview schedule has been conducted in the United States (Hayes, 1997). That study has so far gathered data on 508 children enrolled in Even Start Family Literacy programmes, and on a comparison group of 206 children from the same classrooms as the Even Start children. The pattern of results was very similar to that found in this study: the Even Start children were rated by their teachers as superior to their peers on seven of the eight characteristics (the exception being probable success in school, where the two groups were equal).

From 1994 to 1995 the NFER carried out a detailed evaluation of family literacy programmes which showed that both parents and children gained significantly from the courses. With any new programme that helps to raise standards it is important to ask the question 'do the effects last?'

The Agency commissioned NFER to follow up a sample of the parents and children between twenty and thirty four months later. This is the report of their study. It presents encouraging findings on the continuing progress of parents and children and on the parents' involvement with their children's schools.

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